

# Interview Guidelines

We recommend that you print this document and refer to the appropriate section of interest.

- [How to Find the Best Person For Your Job](#)
- [Before You Interview](#)
- [Responsibilities of the Selection Committee](#)
- [The Ten-Step Interview Process](#)

## How to Find the Best Person For Your Job

### *Step 1: Profile the position functions*

The key to effective interviewing and hiring is the establishment of functions. By deciding upon the essential functions of the position, you will be able to determine the job's specific requirements.

**"Essential Functions"** are defined as the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform satisfactorily. Carefully examine each job to determine which functions are essential to satisfactory performance.

### **Factors to consider in determining if a function is essential include:**

- Whether the performance of the functions is one of the reasons the position exists
- The number of other employees available to perform the function or among whom the performance of the function can be distributed
- Consequences of not requiring that an employee perform the function
- The degree of expertise or skill required to perform the function
- Time spent performing the function
- The actual work experience of a present or past employee in the job

### *Step 2: Establish specific requirements*

After you have established the position's essential functions, determine the specific skills, knowledge, ability, experience, etc. needed by the applicant to fulfill each function.

To gain a clear understanding of these requirements, try to categorize them according to those items that are behavioral in nature and those that are technical. "Technical" requirements refer to specific skills, expertise or experience that your position demands. "Behavioral" requirements refer to how a person needs to act in order to fulfill a given responsibility (e.g., "self motivated," "well organized," "attentive to detail,"). Please note that behavioral requirements must be defined in behavioral terms. For example, rather than listing "good communication skills" as a requirement for a position requiring interaction with disgruntled students, you would do better to list "the ability to listen and respond to students' complaints effectively."

Try assessing each of the position's essential functions in light of three basic questions.

- What must an applicant **know**? (examples: knowledge of software or personal computers)
- What must he or she **be**? (examples: punctual or well organized)
- What must he or she **have**? (example: a specialized certificate, skill, experience)
- What skills are not negotiable, meaning what is needed on day one?

### *Step 3: Establish your priorities*

The last step is the establishment of priorities in your requirements. You want to ensure that in an interview you will gain information about the essential requirements. Categorize your requirements according to critical ("must haves"/non-negotiable) and desirable ("want to haves"/can be acquired on the job).

"Critical" requirements are those you absolutely must have--those critical factors that will eliminate some applicants. "Desirable" requirements, secondary selection criteria, are attributes you would like an applicant to possess in addition to the critical requirements. Desirable requirements can generally be learned on the job.

## **Before You Interview**

*Contact your HR Employment Consultant/Recruiter.*

Set aside time at this point to develop an understanding of the position, settle any questions regarding special requirements, and define selection criteria. Ask any questions you may have about the position regarding your selection criteria, special requirements, applicants referred, interview questions, and/or the interview process.

*Choose a diverse selection committee*

The selection committee will help you pick the candidate best suited for the position and for the unit overall. Select committee members and a chairperson based on the following criteria, keeping diversity within the panel in mind.

- Vested interest in the responsibilities of the position
- Knowledge of the goals of the unit or office
- Working relationships
- Supervisory responsibilities
- Campus interaction

In the interest of fairness, committee members should not needlessly reveal that they are going to serve as panelists.

### *Responsibilities of the Selection Committee Chairperson*

1. Provide Selection Committee with selection criteria
2. Ensure that the same procedure is followed for each candidate
3. Escort the candidate into the room, introduce the panel, put the applicant at ease, explain the interview process, and ask the first question
4. Ensure that no inappropriate questions are asked
5. Inform the candidate of the timeline for selecting a finalist and filling the position
6. Keep to the time schedule
7. Close the interview
8. Make final recommendations to the hiring authority on behalf of the selection committee

### *Responsibilities of the Selection Committee*

9. Screen the applications and make recommendations for interview if directed by the committee chairperson
10. Help develop interview questions based on selection criteria as appropriate
11. Maintain **absolute confidentiality** of the selection process and do not discuss the process with anyone outside the interview process/selection committee unless directed by the committee chairperson
12. Be mindful of legal guidelines pertaining to inappropriate questions
13. Evaluate candidates during the interview and make recommendations to the committee chairperson or hiring authority regarding the most appropriate applicant

### *Have a plan*

Review the position description to identify skills, knowledge and abilities essential for successfully performing the job. Develop a set of carefully thought-out interview questions based on the predetermined selection criteria and functional areas listed on the position description that relate directly to performance and to your expectations for the position. See [Sample of Appropriate Interview Questions](#). Your Employment and Services Consultant/Recruiter can also help you develop job-related questions.

Prepare a list of questions to use when checking references for finalists. Again, questions must be job-related. See [Telephone Reference Check List Form](#).

### *Screen carefully*

**Note: The Employment Services Unit will review and screen applications against the criteria stated in the vacancy listing and the position description before referring to the department. After the final filing date, referrals will be forwarded to the department contact identified on the vacancy listing request.**

The selection committee must screen applications for the most appropriately qualified applicants to interview. After applicants are selected, the committee members should review their applications again to pinpoint areas where additional information may be needed or can be clarified during the interview. Prepare key areas of inquiries for all applicants.

### *Contact the applicants*

The committee chairperson or designee contacts the applicants to invite the candidate for an interview and advises them of the time, date, and place for the interview, the expected length of the interview, parking availability and parking fees, and interview procedures. You may also want to ask the applicants to bring any additional information they would like to share, such as performance evaluations, reference letters or work samples. Please contact your Employment Consultant/Recruiter for more information.

## **The Ten Step Interview Process**

The following guidelines are provided as an aid in complying with University policy and procedures and with federal and state laws. Before the interview, take a few minutes to study the job application and supplemental materials. Never write on the original application or resume; your comments, "squiggles," highlighting, etc., could be used in legal proceedings if a subpoena is issued for the application materials. The application can be your interview map--keep it visible during the interview to keep you on track.

### *1. Create a relaxed interview setting*

The interview setting should be quiet, comfortable, and free of distraction from telephones and any other kind of interruption. If you must use an office, arrange that all phone calls be forwarded to another line. Keep on schedule, as candidates become apprehensive when asked to wait.

Ask each candidate to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the interview. Give him/her a copy of the position description and any other materials you feel are important before the interview, such as an organizational chart, agenda for the interview, and a list of the selection committee members with their titles. Allow at least 15 minutes between interviews to permit candidates to come and go without overlap, and to allow the committee members to evaluate a candidate's responses to questions while the answers are still fresh in their minds.

## 2. Follow a logical sequence

Keep the same format for each candidate and allow an equal amount of time for each candidate to answer questions. Introduce the candidate to the rest of the committee and invite him or her to be seated. Provide information regarding the expected timeframe for filling the position and what the interview is meant to accomplish. You can briefly define the job responsibilities.

## 3. Let the candidate do the talking

After defining the job responsibilities, let the candidate "do the talking." It is extremely important to listen and concentrate on what the he/she is saying. The candidate should carry 80-85% of the total conversation. The panel members' input should be limited to asking questions, probing deeper, and keeping the candidate on track. The panel should clear up points on the application form, asking follow-up questions that encourage the candidate to talk. Ask only questions that are directly related to the job. Use "W" questions--who, what, when, where, and why; also, how? Several types of questions are useful:

- **Direct questions** are easy to understand, and are more likely to yield concise answers and specific information. Example: *"Why did you apply for this position?"*
- **Open ended questions** often produce unexpected and valuable information, may reveal attitudes and feelings, and can indicate how well an applicant can organize his or her thoughts. Example: *"Tell us about your job at XYZ Corp."*
- **behavioral questions** are encouraged. These types of questions require a candidate to analyze a situation and can reveal the extent of his/her experience. Example: *Describe an experience when you...* These questions must be specifically related to the job functions discussed in the position description.
- **Probing questions**, such as *"Could you explain what you mean by ...?"* can further clarify the candidate's views.

Allow silence after asking a question so that you don't interrupt the candidate's thinking process. Encourage candidate with: *"Take your time, we want you to be specific."*

## 4. Be mindful of your questions

Formulate questions that indicate whether or not a candidate meets the requirements you have established for the position. Keep three rules in mind:

- Ask questions that focus on past employment performance. Avoid questions that address the candidate's personal lifestyles or habits
- Ask questions that relate to your listed skill, ability, knowledge or experience requirements
- Ask the same questions of all candidates.

Avoid:

- Closed questions that require merely a yes or no response

- Multiple questions that require several answers
- "Loaded" questions that force a choice between two alternatives
- Questions that are illegal and dealing with areas that are not factors for job performance, such as gender (if you would not ask a question of a man, do not ask it of a woman, and vice versa), age, race, religion, veteran status, marital status, medical conditions (do not make medical judgments or disqualify a candidate on factors that are purely medical in nature), and disability (it is illegal to ask about the nature and/or severity of the disability, the condition causing the disability, if the applicant will need treatment or special leave because of the disability, or about any prognosis or expectation regarding the condition or disability). Contact your Employment Consultant/Recruiter if you have questions.

#### 5. Take notes

Taking notes will help you remember details of the interview; however, writing notes during the interview could be distracting and upsetting to a candidate. If you plan to take notes, explain before the interview starts that you will be taking notes or recording the candidate's responses **to interview questions** so that you will not have to rely on memory. This should help reduce suspicion and nervousness. Make sure you maintain some eye contact while you are writing. See [Interview Rating Scale](#).

#### 6. Close on a proper note

After the committee members have explored all performance factors, they can ask the candidate if he or she has any questions, needs clarification, or anything to add. Ask the candidate if he or she is still seriously considering the position. Thank the candidate for coming, and explain your notification process-- when a decision will be made, whether a second interview will be conducted, and how candidates will be notified. Remember to smile, shake hands, and lead the candidate to the door. Note: *Keep the process the same for all candidates.*

#### 7. Check references

References are checked for three basic reasons:

- Verify employment
- Verify what you have learned during the interview
- Obtain employment recommendations

References should always be checked regardless of your impression of the interviewed candidate's qualifications. Reference checks should be conducted for every finalist, **after** you have completed your interviews. Use the reference checklist or develop your own job-related questions. Your list of questions should be developed ahead of time to ensure consistency and fairness to all candidates. Questions **must be job related**. Responses can be used in consideration **only if documented**. Ask, Is this information documented or a matter of record? If the candidate is a current employee, you may review the employee's personal file in Human Resources. Please contact your Employment Consultant/Recruiter for information regarding this review. If you review the candidate's personnel record file, be careful/mindful of how the information is to be used. Compare information that relates to the new position in terms of skills, knowledge, and abilities. Also, be aware that aged information that speaks unfavorably may no longer reflect the candidate's attributes. Check current references to ensure fairness to the candidate. Note: *There is no legal prohibition against an employer's attempt to obtain reference information; however, for a variety of reasons, including adverse litigation decisions, employers tend to provide minimal to no information.*

#### 8. Make your selection

All information obtained in the interviews should be kept confidential. Evaluate the candidate solely on what you learned in the interview, the candidate's responses to interview questions and information gathered during the reference check. Each panel member should ask himself or herself: Setting aside my

personal biases, would I hire this person with reasonable confidence that he or she could handle the job successfully? Select the candidate who has the qualifications to perform the duties of the position effectively. See [Interview Rating Scale](#).

#### 9. Decide on a salary

**New hires:** In general, a department can make an offer up to the mid-point of the salary range for new hires (new to UC). Any salary above these levels will be by exception only and requires the approval of Employment Services/HR before a hiring commitment can be made. Salary request letters should outline **candidates background as it relates to the position** and recruitment difficulty; salary history and evaluation of the candidate's experience with relationship to placement within a salary range; relationship to internal employees in the same classification (salary equity among internal employees is an important consideration when setting salaries). Offers of employment above midpoint for non-covered range positions require Employment Services unit approval prior to the salary offer. You must always check with internal protocol(s) established for funding issues. **Current Employees:** In general, a UC employee who is promoted to a step-based position with a higher salary range maximum may receive a salary increase to the minimum of the new salary range or the equivalent of a one-step increase, whichever is greater, provided that the resultant salary does not exceed the maximum of the new salary range. **Please consult with your Employment Consultant/Recruiter regarding collective bargaining stipulations prior to a job offer.** For non-represented positions, a UC employee who is promoted to a position with a grade-based salary range may receive a salary increase from 0 - 25 percent, provided that the resultant salary does not exceed the maximum of the new salary range and all combined salary actions do not exceed 25% within a fiscal year. **Please consult with your Employment Consultant/Recruiter prior to making a job offer.**

A UC employee who transfers laterally into a position with an equivalent salary range typically does not receive a change in salary. Consult with your Employment Consultant/Recruiter regarding policy and collective bargaining stipulations prior to salary offer.

#### 10. Complete the recruitment packet

Good personnel practices are:

- Follow any internal protocol established for your Unit/College/Service Area
- Touch base with your Employment Consultant/Recruiter to advise of your selection and to discuss salary offers
- Call the successful candidate to offer the position
- Follow up with a confirmation of the offer, acceptance, salary, title and starting date, etc.
- All candidates who were interviewed should be notified, by telephone if possible
- A candidate has the right to know the reason(s) for not being selected; however, reason should be suggested by selection criteria based on the position description
- Provide justification for hire/non hires to withstand internal or external audit

*Revised: November 12, 2009*